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122 e. 4. Bligh (E. V.) : Church reform. 1885.

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CHURCH REFORM.

CONTENTS:

CATHEDRAL REFORM—DEANS AND CANONS.
CLERICAL INCOMES—CHURCH PREFERMENT.
THE BISHOP'S VETO—CLERICAL DISCIPLINE.
REVISION OF THE LITURGY.
CHURCH LEGISLATION.

BY

THE HON. AND REV. E. V. BLIGH, M.A.,

(Rector of Rotherfield, Sussex, 1858-1865. Vicar of Bletsing, Kent, 1865-1875.)

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PREFACE.

SOME of the following remarks upon the subject of Church Reform have been already published in Letters to "The Times" Newspaper; but it has been thought that the addition of other topics, not then treated of, might be useful to the friends of Liturgical Revision and the advocates of other Reforms in the Church of England. The Author, therefore, ventures to send forth this Pamphlet, in the hope that it may prove sufficiently interesting to elicit discussion, and, in some measure, form the basis of a new point of departure, suitable to the present period.

E. V. B.

January 1st, 1885.

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CHURCH REFORM.

CATHEDRAL REFORM—DEANS AND CANONS.

IT has sometimes been said, and though it may be a mere *façon de parler*, there is something in it, that in nine cases out of ten the only business of a Dean is to keep the Bishop out of his Cathedral.

Be this as it may, some £50,000 per annum is consumed upon the yearly incomes of our Deans; and in these days, when, on the one hand, the Episcopate is craving for continual increase and multiplication, and on the other hand the poorer Clergy are approximating to starvation, it will be well that we should consider how large a sum is being constantly expended upon an institution the chief, or only apparent merit of which is, that it provides for a very respectable and honoured little company of distinguished personalities.

It was a witty saying of a living Bishop, "Why not turn *Lake* into a See?" Those who live in a Northern County will recognise the allusion, and if the worthy Dean of Durham had been translated into the new Bishopric of

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Newcastle, £3,000 per annum would have been saved somewhere, and the new Bishopric would have been started probably some years antecedently to its actual foundation. Let this example suffice to show what might be done by applying the whole of the £50,000, now received by the Deans, to an increase of the Episcopate throughout England.

Or let the £3,000 of the Dean of Durham be considered in twelve portions of £250 each, to be devoted to the stipends of the Clergymen of twelve new Churches in Durham and Newcastle, and we may have an appropriate instance of what might be done by applying the incomes of the Deans to the poorer Clergy.

Let me clear the ground by saying I start with the utmost reverence for our Cathedrals, and with every desire to see their Services carried on in future much as they have been in the past, but I venture to contend that two resident Canons, and the minor Canons, with the Bishop as their natural head, are quite sufficient for this purpose, and that the Deans (of course I mean the Deans of the future, not touching any life interest) may very profitably and properly be done away with.

Some recent quasi-collisions between Bishops and Deans have impressed upon my mind at this time more particularly the convictions of many years before. I need give no reasons, but merely indicate that the quarrel of a Dean with his Diocesan, over a position or a prayer, is not edifying to the general Community—nay, it is almost scandalous. A sharp passage of arms between two Dignitaries of the Church of England in the same Cathedral City is an exhibition which all thoughtful Churchmen must call deplorable—whichever is right individually, it may be said that both must be wrong collectively. As an Apostle puts it, "My brethern, these things

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ought not so to be." And why should they be? is my question. Why perpetuate a system of *imperium in imperio* which can most well be dispensed with?

Surely, if there is a church in the whole Diocese which the Bishop ought to be able to call his own, it is the Cathedral. Surely, with the assistance of efficient Canons always ready to yield to their Bishop a general and loyal obedience, there could be no fear that the Church of England would ever suffer from the extinction of the present order of Deans.

Some of the Deans are men of that active turn of mind which resents relegation to a lounge in the cloister, or pacing round and round the Cathedral monuments with a string of tourists. No wonder that their noble desires for work seem irreconcilable with a post, which is more suitable for recluses and bookworms than for zealous English Churchmen.

Something may perhaps be said for the Institution of Deans as a retreat for the learned; but it is difficult to see what other possible use of a Dean can counterbalance the distinct disadvantage of being the natural rival, from his very position, of his Bishop.

I submit, therefore, somewhat confidently, that the Deans are to be regarded as a superfluity of very questionable utility, and as an item of extravagance which it is the interest of the Church to reduce *in toto*. If it be wished to preserve the time-honoured title in the Cathedral, then I would say let the senior Canon be the Dean (*doyen*) of his fellows as an honorary title only; but let the Bishop be distinctly supreme, subject only to the legalised prescriptions touching the rites of the Church and the proprietary rights of the Cathedral body.

There may be other matters which would bear to be considered *pari passu* with the abolition of Deans. The

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revived authority of the Bishop should not mean the transfer of the Dean's Cathedral patronage into his hands. The independence of the Chapter must doubtless be preserved, and, as a rule, the Bishop's authority should be spiritual only and should not extend to things temporal. There is probably much room for reform in the latter branch also, but the two questions should be kept distinct as much as possible.

Two chief points would be gained by the abolition of the present *status* of Deans—

1. £50,000 per annum saved.

2. Mischievous collisions between great Church Dignitaries avoided.

Upon a careful computation of the revenues of both Deans and Canons in 29 cathedrals, after leaving a sum of £3,000 with residences for the future remuneration of two Canons (or a Dean and Sub-dean), amply sufficient in each Cathedral, the sum to be saved per annum is £70,000, or (say) a capital sum of two millions, for other church purposes. These figures would, I believe, be found to be approximately correct, after calculating the number of present residences at a fair average rent.

It is comparatively immaterial whether the two Canons (who should both be resident) be called Dean and Sub-dean, or not; but the *genius loci* possibly demands this. The real point seems to be to get the necessary work done, and a proper supervision of the Cathedrals maintained without ruinous waste to the Church at large.

I submit that the peace and dignity and future usefulness of the Church of England are largely concerned in the suggestion that a very large source of expenditure representing a capital sum of about £2,000,000, should be diverted from its present use after the death of all the Deans and Canons now in office.

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CLERICAL INCOMES—CHURCH PREFERMENT.

IT has already been indicated that the money saved by the abolition of the present Decanal office, if not applied to the increase of the Episcopate, might be utilized in the sustentation of additional Incumbents. Some of the poorer Clergy would thus no doubt benefit, and the burden of poverty would press less heavily upon the general body; but there would still remain the great mass of those who are but ill-provided for.

It seems only right that the financial position of the working Clergy should receive attention, while the shifting of large incomes, as between Church Dignitaries, is being considered. I, therefore, venture to offer some suggestions on Church Preferment.

How many mouths must water at the mere mention of Church Preferment! The thousands of unpreferred Clergy have indeed a right to be curious. A more rapid rate of promotion has been obtained in the Army, and why not in the Church? It is quite certain that the present system has not attained to the *ne plus ultra* of excellence.

This is not the place—for there is neither need nor room—for statistics. It is well known, to use the equine figure, that there are considerably—indeed, innumerably—more horses than stalls to put them in. Many of the poor jaded steeds who have so long been ungroomed and badly fed and cared for would do honour to the stable!

The first reason for some reform in the system of Preferment is the just claim of those thousands of the Clergy who have no prospects of advancement. Why should some men have a life-long possession of the prizes to the exclusion of all others? The Clergy have to pass through the same

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high educational course at the Schools or at the Universities, and they have alike to satisfy the examining Chaplains of the Bishops. It is unreasonable that from this time forward their fortunes should be unduly weighted. They ought to have a fair prospect of probability that at the age (say) of forty years they will be Incumbents.

A second ground for raising the question of Patronage and Preferment lies in the *a priori* improbability that a system which allows the permanent appointment of one man to the same parish during a whole lifetime is the best possible. Considering the changes and chances which affect men as well as things, it is in the highest degree unlikely that a man, perhaps appointed Rector or Vicar at the age of 25, will be the man best suited to the parish up to the age perhaps of 90.

If it is a good thing (which it is) for the best preacher or parochial minister to give his congregation a week or two's change in a single year so that they may come in contact with some other mind and hear some other voice besides his own, how can it be said that the same principle has no application to long years and lifelong periods? Truth is many-sided, and it is by the exhibition of it in a diversified form that the best results may be obtained. No man can hope to afford in himself or by his ministrations, a perfect sample.

Thirdly, the standard of human, and it must be said clerical, excellence is not high enough to make it safe in the interests of any particular parish or population to connect it exclusively with any one man.

There are good and able, and there are bad and incapable, Clergymen. Either a good man or a bad one (*i.e.*, for parish purposes) is appointed to a benefice. He is there for life; either blessing or loss for that parish. If the Incumbent is a good man, blessing, so far as it can be

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connected with any one man; but if he is a drone or bookworm or something worse, that parish is doomed for his whole lifetime. Surely there should be some "give and take" as between the parishes of the land; some should occasionally part with their blessings that they may impart them to those who have not. There should be a more equal chance than there is now of a parish obtaining from time to time a good Incumbent.

A fourth reason for reform is that the system of a life-long freehold in an Incumbency is a serious obstacle in the way of effectual Clerical Discipline. By all means let the Clergy be independent and irremoveable during the period of their tenure, whatever that may be; but independence does not, and should not, mean unlimited autocracy, or such a position as enables an inferior to defy a superior officer. A recalcitrant and litigious Incumbent nowadays knows full well that his Diocesan Bishop may be trifled with, because within the widest limits the possession of a lifelong freehold is his strong rock of defence and defiance. But imagine the tenure of the Incumbency to be for a term (say) of ten years certain only, then how different would be his bearing probably! If he could not continue in that Incumbency or succeed to another without the necessary certificate and goodwill of his Diocesan, *quantum mutatus!* what a change we should realise in our Ecclesiastical Courts—comparatively no business, no pleadings, no blocks; better still, no martyrdoms; such scandals as Mr. Mackonochie's suit, which lasted 16 years, or the incarceration of Mr. Green in Lancaster Castle, simply tapped at the source, or grubbed up at the roots, and henceforth impossible. Self-interest and future prospects would provide the most effectual remedy for rebellion.

For all these reasons, among many others which might be given, it seems desirable and even necessary to recon-

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sider our system of Church Preferment and Patronage. Both on account of the numerical strength of the Clergy List and upon abstract and *a priori* grounds, and upon those affecting the due efficiency and discipline of the Clergy, some changes seem to be called for.

What are these to be? It is rather taken for granted here, that the sale of Advowsons and next Presentations would have been already dealt with in some wise and well-considered way, such as that indicated in the late report of a Parliamentary Committee. In any case, the recommendations which are now offered would, if acted upon, practically supply a remedy for many scandals in that direction.

(1.) The first point is some limitation as to age, with a view to honourable retirement from a beneficed position. Having regard to the ordinary term of human life, and the legal age for entering the ministry, the figures of 70 or 73 might be the limit. The former would be preferable, and if the Diaconate might commence at 20, instead of at 23, a clergyman would have 50 years in front of him, so as to retire at 70. (We may here say in passing that five years of the Diaconate antecedently to Priest's orders, with the option of discontinuing the Clerical profession, might be an improvement upon the present state of things.) The rule here indicated should apply to Bishops as well as Clergymen.

(2.) No Benefice should be tenable for more than ten years upon the same Presentation; and it should be understood that the re-appointment of the same person as Incumbent is to be the exception rather than the rule, and that it is not to take place unless for special reasons, among which there must be a general concurrence between the Patron and the Parishioners and the Bishop.

(3.) There should be a more equal apportionment as

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between Incumbents, with due regard to the rights of property. Where several benefices are in the gift of one and the same patron, this would not be difficult. Tithes (to be collected no longer from tenants, but from the landowners) might be paid to some central corporate body, in trust first for the Rector or Vicar of the parish in which they lie up to a *maximum* point to be determined upon, and secondly for distribution among the smaller benefices in the same gift. An illustration might be given somewhat thus:— Say, there are in the same gift three Benefices, one worth £1,500, requiring two Curates; the second, £500, and the third £100 per annum; and say also that £600 is to be the *maximum* of clear income to any Incumbent, after providing for his Curates. Allowing a sum of £300 for this purpose in the case of the larger living, there would remain £600 for the two livings which do not require Curates. Adding £100 to one of these last, and £500 to the other, all three Incumbents would have £600 per annum. Of course, such a principle might be extended far more widely if the whole question of tithes was taken seriously in hand, and there might be a more complete re-arrangement as to all Benefices on the principle of always respecting, in the first place, local interests, and then administering the surplus funds for the general good.

(4.) Curates must be more adequately remunerated. The system of under-paying Curates is an evil, which has too long pressed upon this honourable section of the working Clergy. In some way a different scale of payment from that now existing should be arrived at, and as £600 has been roughly named as the *maximum* for an Incumbent, £200 might be mentioned as a well-qualified Curate's *minimum*.

It may be thought that the foregoing figures are too high or too low, and it is not intended that anything more than

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an illustration should be given here. The object is rather to call attention to the necessity of *reform* in the Church in this direction. The day is gone by when true Conservatism could rest upon ancient ways and methods and mere traditions. The stagnation of promotion has been dealt with in the Army, and it must come to be dealt with in the Church. Rotten boroughs have been swept away in the State, and fresh redistribution of political power is even now called for in the Constituencies. *Salus populi suprema lex* is a maxim which must be honoured more than ever in an advancing and progressive age. The interests of the Church of England will never be forwarded by an ostrich-like and complacent blindness to the changes wrought by lapse of time. Suggestions like the foregoing may be epitheted as wild or revolutionary, but these are days when men must look the spectre of revolution in the face, and occupy the ground which *it* would otherwise occupy by thoughtful and well-digested Reforms. It was Lord Palmerston in 1850 who thus laid down the truth as to revolution :—

"Now there are revolutionists of two kinds in this world. In the first place, violent, hot-headed, and unthinking men who fly to arms, &c. . . . . These are the revolutionists of one class. But there are revolutionists of another kind ; blind-minded men who, animated by antiquated prejudices and daunted by ignorant apprehensions, dam up the current of human improvement, until the irresistible pressure of accumulated discontent breaks down the opposing barriers, and overthrows and levels to the earth those very institutions which a timely application of renovating means would have rendered strong and lasting."

The words of the great English Minister are not inapplicable to the Church. It was stated in *The Times* of March 7th, 1878, that one-half of the 24,000 Clergy of the

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Church of England have incomes under £200 per annum. It may be added, that nearly 5,000 of the livings so-called are under that figure, and upwards of 1,000 of these are under £100 per annum. While this is so, the high places in the Church and large incomes of the more fortunate Incumbents are life monopolies.

I submit, therefore, that while the property of the Church is jealously economized and preserved, its honours and its emoluments ought to be distributed with more reference to the working capacity of the holders; and that some such measures as have been taken for securing a more speedy promotion and the abolition of the purchase system in the Army, need to be taken in the Church, and that too with the least delay possible.

THE BISHOP'S VETO—CLERICAL DISCIPLINE.

A GOOD deal has been said about what is called the Bishop's *veto* in regard to Ecclesiastical procedure. The real *veto* which is required, is some ordinance which will make it impossible for Bishops of the Church of England, to promote Romanising doctrines and practices in their Cathedrals and Dioceses.

The *veto* surely is necessary against the Bishop, as well as (if so) for him. If he may forbid proceedings against a Romanising Incumbent, the least possible satisfaction which can be given to the Protestant public is an inhibition against himself to indulge in Romanising proceedings.

But the fact is that the *veto* of a Bishop as to legal proceedings is inconsistent with the rights of a British sub-

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ject: it is a leaf out of the old Popish system which places the Bishop of Rome above all law. The *veto*, too, is not properly applicable to the exercise of that paternal authority, which consists rather in advice and suasion than in the enforcement of an order.

It is absurd to talk of a Bishop exercising his paternal authority in the library, as he and the erring Incumbent sit facing each other in two chairs, and in the next breath declaring that the matter in dispute must be peremptorily dealt with in the Bishop's Court. If the Bishop is to be looked upon in the light of a paternal authority, who will advise and help a possible litigant in his difficulty, it is essential that he should be divested of all legal authority to determine the issue.

It is directed in the Prayer-Book that when there is a diversity of opinion, the parties shall resort to the Bishop of the Diocese; and it is doubtless intended that his decision should be final. This is excellent in theory, and if both Bishops and Clergymen are sound Protestant Churchmen, it would doubtless suffice in practice; but the Tractarian and Romanising movement of the last fifty years has dangerously shifted the centre of gravity, and, to use a nautical illustration, the compass has become deranged, and the needle oscillates most dangerously, so that the navigation of our whole system of Church Government is imperilled. The late defiance of long established custom in respect of the eastward (Mass) position by the Bishop of Chester may be adduced in proof of this. The majority of late Episcopal and Decanal appointments seem, indeed, to have been made with the intention of leavening the Church of England with Roman doctrines and practices. It is no longer safe to depend upon any one Bishop as a faithful expounder of the Articles of Religion or the Formularies of the Church of England.

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Hence the recourse to the Bishop should be limited to a respectful duty only; and although it is most desirable that a Bishop should settle all disputes, and it is doubtless morally incumbent upon a right-minded Clergyman to be guided by his Bishop, yet it is not safe—it is no longer desirable—as regards strict force of law, to look upon the Bishop as an authority who can either *veto* or *allow* finally in any matter.

The remarks of Lord Bramwell in the famous case of the Rev. T. T. Carter, of Clewer, and three of the other Judges, tend to show the horror with which judges regard the tortuosities of the ecclesiastical mind. Law is not matter of predilection, but of equalisation. How can a Romanising Bishop deal equally and fairly with some Protestant Churchman who complains of Popish practices in the Church! The Bishop's conscience is perhaps a pliable one, and his own personal bias in favour of Sacerdotalism inclines it gently over to the *veto* of any legal procedure against the very good man—the very earnest man—the very self-denying man (so he is reputed), but the *very* false-to-his-colours man, who has turned his parish church into a theatre or a mass-house. The Bishop simply puts himself across the straight way to law and justice; and then the precious birthright of a British subject is denied to him, because, forsooth, the Bishop has a *veto!*

If there must be a *veto* at all, then let it be all the other way, and let it be made impossible for any Bishop to stand between a parishioner and his legal rights. The *veto* of public law—the same law for one and all—is the only one reasonable.

But it may be said that by ceasing to make the Bishop a judge, his authority as a chief officer of the Church is impaired. By no means. It would be well indeed if that authority was more generally recognised and appealed to.

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The direction of the Prayer-Book to refer matters in dispute to the Bishop, ought to be acted upon; and a grave responsibility should be thrown upon the Clergyman if he lightly disregarded the Episcopal direction. The *onus probandi* should in fact be thrown upon the Clergyman, of establishing in a judicial court (say the Archbishop's) that the direction of the Bishop was an unreasonable one. By all means, in an Episcopal Church, let the authority of the Bishop be respected; but do away with his *legal status* as a Judge and also with his *veto*. It will then be found, probably, that both Bishop and Incumbent will be much more careful, how they overstep the limits of doctrines and practices which are defined by law and statute. There will be a remarkable diminution in the ignoble army of Romanising martyrs, and Diocesans will not allow their sympathies any longer to promote either Ecclesiastical Anarchy or Popish Ritualism.

The Bishop's *veto* being put on one side as unconstitutional and unjust, and the general rights of Parishioners and Churchmen having thus been vindicated, the law itself ought to be made clear, and amended wherever necessary. Bishops, Clergy and Laity alike owe obedience to it, and it is rather hard to insist upon a strict conformity to Statutes, which were originally enacted to meet the circumstances and requirements of a state of things, removed from us by more than two Centuries. There seems no reason now, why the details of the Rubrics (which are the bye-laws of Church of England) should be in every respect so binding as in the comparatively dark ages of the Commonwealth and the Restoration. There is no doubt room for many an elastic and convenient substitution of the word "may" for "shall" in the Rubrics. There is room for fair difference of method and divergence of opinion, within the four corners of the Church. Upon the other hand it must not be over-

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looked, that the Church of England was established, distinctly as a protest against the superstitions and errors of the Church of Rome, and that its only *raison d'être* in the eyes of millions of Protestant Nonconformists is, that English Churchmen, whether High, Low, or Broad, should reflect in the main the prevailing National sentiment.

It is surely conceivable, that by friendly interchange of opinions, with an honest desire to remove stumbling-blocks out of one another's way, and to open up new methods and ways of usefulness, men of the school of Hooker might meet on common ground with the Theological descendants of the Puritans, and the more modern followers of Tait and Arnold, and arrive at some conclusion by which the Rubrics, and to some small extent the mediæval phraseology of the Liturgy itself, could be re-adapted to modern uses. Why should not the law, as settled by Parliament in 1662, be modified and amended?

A fresh departure having thus been obtained upon lines satisfactory to all loyal Churchmen, the discipline of the Clergy would be rendered less difficult; obsolete rubrics and terms having been removed, the uncertainties which lie at the root of many controversies would no longer foster the same spirit of resistance and litigiousness. It is altogether suicidal for the Church to remain indifferent to the necessity of a proper discipline. The inferior Officer in the Church, as well as in the Army and Navy, should be really subordinate to his superior. The Laity might in this respect afford him real assistance. Something has been said about a Bishop's *veto*, but it is unquestionable that a certain amount of *veto* on the part of the Laity would be most advantageous both to the Clergy and to the Bishop. Clerical troubles often start from small beginnings. *Principiis obsta!* Let no change be made or authorised in a Parish Church, without the consent in writing of the Bishop,

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and without the general body of the Parishioners having had the opportunity of saying *Aye* or *No* to it. Weak and versatile minds, strong-willed and wrong-headed temperaments, there will be among the Clergy as in every other class of men, but a simple reform of this kind would go far —very far—to defeat the aberrations and vagaries of injudicious Clergymen. Foolish and disloyal proceedings would be rendered to a large extent impossible, and the chief argument for the Dissenting Chapel in numerous Country Parishes would disappear altogether.

More drastic treatment than this is required for that criminous and slippery *genus* of Clerical Offender, who knows so well how to elude the strict letter of the Statute Law, and so to defy the exercise of authority. There should be some considerable alteration in the system of Testimonials, and the *onus probandi* should be thrown upon every Clergyman, who has a Cure of Souls, to clear up his position by thoroughly respectable and undoubted testimony at any time when his character may be assailed. It is altogether monstrous that a chronic drunkard should go scot free, because the Parishioners cannot prove, that he has committed any salient act of drunkenness in pulpit or desk. Hardly less objectionable is it, that a man who systematically swindles tradesmen, or begs and borrows money which he never repays, should be able to hold his own in the Rectory or Vicarage for a whole lifetime, because he is clever and sharp enough to keep out of legal meshes. Let every such an one be required to demonstrate his fitness and respectability, to the satisfaction of the Bishop. Let the old-fashioned Testimonials system give way to something better and more continuous. As at present, the three beneficed Clergymen who sign the Testimonials often know next to nothing of the man for whom they certify, and even if they do, they cannot certify for a whole lifetime.

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But this is not all that may be done. If the tenure of a Benefice was restricted to a term of years (as has been previously recommended), a Diocesan Bishop would obtain a great leverage in cases of this description; for self-interest is a most potent argument, and when a man knows that his prospects in future life largely depend upon his conduct in the present, he cannot fail to be influenced by this consideration, and—what is more important to himself still—his character may be possibly redeemed from ruin.

Just one word should be added about Absentee Incumbents. It is quite necessary that some limit should be placed upon absenteeism, whether on the ground of ill-health, or for other causes, and so an end put to the scandal of Rectors or Vicars drawing considerable emoluments from Parishes in which they are rarely if ever seen. A case in point occurs to my mind where an habitual Absentee Incumbent has been drawing, for some fifteen years past, an income of as many hundred pounds per annum, and who seems likely to continue in the regions of absenteeism for the term of his natural life, the Bishop meanwhile alleging that he has no remedy.

If the foregoing suggestions, or some of them, should be acted upon, a great and perceptible advance will have been made in matters affecting the Discipline of the Clergy and the peace of the Church at large which have been only too long neglected.

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REVISION OF THE LITURGY.

EXCEPT as a matter akin to the preservation of fossils, and in the interests of archæology, it is hard to see why every leaf of the Prayer Book is essential to its continuity; or why some words here and there may not be displaced for others. Let any one look forward, if he can, two hundred years; let him dispose of his property and lay out his lands, and define accurately the investments in the funds and in the stocks, which he may think most suitable for the lineal descendants of his children and children's children in the 10th generation. Let him picture to himself the year A.D. 2100, and whatever may be the wisdom and the admirableness of his disposition now, would he like to be entirely bound by them then? In spirit no doubt he might, but not in the letter; he would wish his real intentions to be carried out; and if the character of the times should have considerably altered, owing to the changes and the progress which are characteristic of mankind, he would no doubt desire that the strict letter of his bequests and directions should be duly varied.

Now this is all that Revisionists of the Prayer Book claim. They say that the Church of England has received an heritage—a great and noble heritage—a property which was, in the first instance, acquired at much pains and at a tremendous cost, and which has been bequeathed to the generations of every succeeding age, with the full impress of the wishes and intentions of the great Fathers and noble Martyrs of the English Reformation. All, and more than all they did, which it was possible for men to do. Hardly emerged from darkness which might be felt; surrounded on every side by the gross superstitions of the Papacy; encumbered by its formulas and phraseology of Rome, they

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produced a marvellous and incomparable Book of Common Prayer, the language of which whether in point of terseness, or of beauty, or of expressiveness, has stood the test of ages. Holy men were our great Reformers indeed—looking, and looking not in vain, to be led by the Divine Spirit in the enterprise to which they stood committed: the result is before us, in the familiar pages of the English Prayer Book.

Let us now suppose that Archbishop Cranmer or Bishop Ridley, or Bishop Latimer, could be amongst us once more to-day, and realise the vast progress and marvellous changes which have taken place in the State, in science and locomotion, in men's habits and ideas. Would they not wish for many a useful re-adaptation of the directions originally drawn by them, to our modern requirements in Church matters? Might they not be supposed to remonstrate, indeed, somewhat thus: "Why did you not alter these things long ago? Why did you wait all these years, instead of promoting what we so obviously wished ourselves, and what we took so much pains to make clear we did wish in the very preface of our own Prayer Book?"

There is a Charity Foundation in a Southern County which provides for the board and lodging of eight or ten wayfaring poor men every night, and a truly Samaritan donation to each of them of a few pence on leaving. Once this was a distinct blessing to the Community, but those travelling days are done now; and the Rogue and Vagabond has found his way into this truly Samaritan Hospice. The founder certainly never intended that dishonest poverty should be the gainer by his bequests, and means are being found to make his benefaction continuous in a slightly altered channel. Just so, the good Fathers of the Reformation who shed their blood for their denial of the errors of the Church of Rome, most certainly did not intend or desire, or

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even dream, that the directions for the Services which they constructed, or the phraseology which they used, should emit such an uncertain sound, that the Romanising party should use them against Protestant Churchmen in the 19th century to bring the Church of England back to Rome. Our forefathers did not direct that a Protestant minister should stand at the north side of a *table* in order that any Clergyman might stand like a Roman priest at the west side of an *altar*, looking eastward, and then claim Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer as their high authority. These Reformer Prelates did not pointedly discard and forbid the Alb and other Vestments, and direct the use of the Surplice only, in order that there might be doubt and confusion about the proper dress of the Clergy, so that any Clergyman might wear Alb or Vestments, or whatever seems right in his own eyes—Protestant, Anglican, Romish, or Babylonish. Our Reformers did not put down their foot upon the Roman *mass*, and draw up their Articles against Trans-substantiation, in order that any Clergyman might publicly preach, or write, or enforce these errors, and then stand acquitted by the highest tribunals of the country upon their high authority, because *they* did not make the matter clear. Cranmer and his associates did not enunciate such terms as "regeneration" and "damnation," in the sense peculiar to their own times, in order that when those times had long passed, and such terms had come to be used and popularly understood in quite a different sense, the responsibility for such a new state of things should be fastened upon them. And more than all, as to these our days of revived Auricular Confession and Priestly Absolution, our forefathers of the Reformation could little have thought that by omitting to sweep away entirely every vestige of formulas in the Roman system from which a pretended authority could be derived to hear

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confessions and to forgive sins, they would, after an interval of about two Centuries be quoted as the authors and abettors of the very errors which chiefly stirred the spirit of Luther, and the Marian Martyrs, and brought about the Reformation both in Germany and in England.

Yet herein lies the main case for Revision in the present day. The Romanising party profess to rely upon what the Compilers of the Prayer Book did, or upon what they left undone, and, in fact, traduce their intentions. It is the old story of the fountain which cannot yield both sweet water and bitter. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism cannot flow from the same source. An intelligent and wise enquiry would demonstrate this, and the mind of the great Reformers would thus be made so clear, that the allegations and artifices of the Roman party would fail to deceive longer. The necessary alterations would have to be made, in order to carry out more completely the purpose of the Compilers of the English Prayer Book. This is what Revisionists desire, and what Romanisers dread. Protestant Churchmen do not seek for any change of doctrine contained in the book; but they do wish that the doctrine which is really there, may be freed from the distressing doubts, which have been conjured up only too successfully by the enemies of the Reformed Faith. If the Revision with which they are identified is sometimes termed Doctrinal Revision, it is in their sense only.

It may be useful to note that eminent Prelates and Dignitaries, such as the Bishops of Peterborough and Liverpool and Manchester, the Dean of Chester, and several Irish Bishops of the present day; the late Archbishops Sumner and Tait, and Bishop Baring; men of other times—as, *e.g.*, more particularly in 1689, Tillotson, Stillingfleet and Tenison; and in our own time, many thoughtful Laymen, such as the Earls of Shaftesbury and Chichester

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and Lord Ebury, have declared more or less in favour of Liturgical Revision.

We may add last, not least, the name of the Rev. W. H. Aitken, the well-known Parish Missioner, whose churchmanship cannot be doubted, but who deliberately states his conviction that the Church of England is wounded in her most vital part, by the senseless jumble and extreme length of the ordinary Morning Service—consisting of Morning Prayer, *cum* Litany, *cum* Communion, *cum* Sermon —all these preceding the celebration of the Lord's Supper itself, and thus practically shutting out this holiest rite from a large number of English Churchmen.

Both for the avoidance of needless and undesirable lengthiness, and of meaningless, if not actually vain, repetitions, and for the purification of its mediæval phraseology, where the meaning of terms has become changed or there is a tint of coarseness; but above all, in order that certain stumbling blocks, of sufficient notoriety, may be taken out of the way of all true Protestants and well-wishers to the Church, and of not a few honest Churchmen, a Revision of the Liturgy is required.

The well is deep and the water is good, but the pipes are partly choked with sand, and the pump cannot work properly. The remedy is obvious, and need not be expensive; as it is not so much new machinery which is wanted, as a little oil to the pump, and the careful removal of the grit and sand and rubbish which no broom has ever reached—for it has not been allowed by "those who are in place of authority" to reach these obstacles—during more than two whole Centuries which must be credited with no small amount of Episcopal apathy and incapacity.

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CHURCH LEGISLATION.

IT remains to be considered how the various Reforms which have been advocated, may best be carried out; and it is important to note that without the healthy action of public opinion, making itself known and felt through adequate and proper channels, nothing in the nature of a satisfactory solution can be hoped for.

In the minds of many persons who do not think much below the surface, it is quite sufficient for all church purposes that the Church has its representatives in the Upper House of Parliament, and that some six-and-twenty Spiritual Peers are nominally watching over its best interests. Such a view, no doubt, largely exists, and in the Upper House itself, to the extent of largely paralysing the active interference of Lay Peers, in a department which these latter seem to think does not concern them equally with their Spiritual Com-Peers, who are quasi-experts in such matters.

But it would appear from the results—or, rather, *non*-results—obtained, that the Church of England might have been better off without any such representation at all in Parliament. The Bishops have rarely initiated any useful measure, and their action, whenever taken, has been characterised by timidity. Up to a comparatively recent date their Lordships were generally appointed as good and safe men who would give no trouble. Even now, they move slowly and collectively as a body, rather than as individuals, and their bond of union is *quieta non movere*. Such a representation of the Church in Parliament is, at best, in the nature of an oligarchy, and has little touch with the more popular instincts of the Lower Clergy.

It might be better that the greater number of the Bishops

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should be relieved altogether of their Parliamentary functions, and their time, which they can ill afford to spend in London, given wholly to Spiritual duties and Diocesan engagements. The voice of the Church might still make itself heard in the Legislature through a certain number of the Bishops in the Upper House; and it would also have its spokesmen among the very large number of Lay Churchmen in both Houses. But it would be well that Representatives from among the Clergy, if the latter should be really and effectually relieved from their disabilities, should also have a place in Parliament.

Although the House of Commons is a good deal indisposed towards the discussion of Church questions, yet the introduction of a few Clergymen—who might be the choice of any Constituencies—would tend to mitigate the unwillingness to touch upon questions in which none present are experts; and the admission of Clergymen (not Beneficed or having Cures of Souls) would, moreover, to a certain extent, be a security for the Clergy in general, that their opinions should have due weight in the Representative House of Parliament. At present such representation can only be obtained by the infliction of a most unnecessary disability upon any Clergyman who may be elected to the House of Commons; for while taking advantage of the "Clerical Disabilities Act" he has to sign his own death-warrant as a Preacher or an Officiating Minister in the Church of England, and few Clergymen will be found to face this ordeal. Such representation is therefore practically *nil;* and when it is seriously pressed that an Electoral Body like Northampton is wronged by the disability of a professed Ätheist to sit in Parliament, it seems hardly fair to deny to men of marked Christian antecedents—if only as a mere matter of British Citizenship—the right to represent any Constituency of which they may be the deliberate choice.

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There is another method—but it is an unpopular one with many Church Reformers on account of previous failures—for arriving at such measures of reform as might receive ultimately the sanction of Parliament. Royal Commissions have from time to time been issued. The Earl of Derby's Administration must be credited at once with the attempt and the failure to remedy some of our present evils. It was in every respect a *fiasco*. So grossly ill-calculated was it to effect its professed objects, that the Archbishop of York and the Earl of Shaftesbury declined to join it. The *Times*, in a leading article, said it was discredited by its composition from the very commencement. A notorious Ritualistic Curate was placed upon it. No Evangelical Reforming Clergyman was appointed. The Bishop of Oxford (Wilberforce) was the prime mover in its formation and the chief wire-puller all through; it gave forth an uncertain voice in its Report; the result was failure.

It appears to have been concluded from this unfortunate mis-carriage of an old Constitutional method, that every future Royal Commission would go and do likewise. It is well, however, to remember that in the year 1689 the very useful Report and Reforming recommendations of another Royal Commission were issued, and would have been acted upon but for the opposition of the Clergy at that time in the Lower House of Convocation. Everything in the present day would depend upon the actual composition of a Royal Commission, and whenever public opinion in a *Protestant*-Reforming sense speaks clearly enough in that respect, no doubt the nomination of Commissioners would correspond largely with the intimation thus conveyed to the Prime Minister or Home Secretary, whose duty it would be to issue the Commission.

It is very uncertain, indeed, if Parliament could—however willing it might be—undertake a Liturgical Revision or

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other kindred reform, without some previous formulation of the numerous details and arrangements which are inseparable from such a topic. The idea of a Royal Commission should not, therefore, be dismissed too hastily. Without some such extraneous assistance, Parliament would be almost inevitably driven back upon Convocation; and this latter body being only an imperfect representation of the Clergy, and not of the Laity at all, what guarantee could the Church at large have—and especially the great majority of Protestant Churchmen—that the measures submitted to Parliament by Convocation would be in any sense acceptable?

It would seem that, as Parliament holds the real key of the position, it is only by the door which shut up Churchmen two centuries ago in King Charles' Act of Uniformity, that they can make their egress from the problems and difficulties with which the Liturgical solution of 1662 was even then pregnant. It is to the prevalence of healthy Protestant public opinion, as frankly expressed in Parliament, that we must chiefly look. How is that to be fostered and asserted? Not surely by that apathy and indifference which have too long characterised the English Laity; not by shrinking from the contest which Romanising Ecclesiastics in the Church of England have invited; not by enduring tamely, or even sulkily, the disloyalties and audacities of Confessing Priests in any parishes; not by leaving such matters to the Clergy altogether, as if they concerned the Clergy only. No! none of such ways lead towards the much wished for light. The Laity should regard such matters as their own—as vital and important matters. They should be ventilated and discussed throughout the length and breadth of the Country. Meetings and Conferences should be held, the assistance of the Press should be sought for; and it may fairly be assumed that, in

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the *Times* and other influential Newspapers, some space will be afforded for Church matters. The Laity in general should find some means of making their wills and voices known and respected, when the Clergy are found disregarding the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and the Faith of the Reformation. Public *Protestant* opinion, there is; but it lies too dormant, almost everywhere. The Laity may assert themselves, if they will. Lay action is the only reasonable ground of hope for those abuses which are chiefly of Clerical creation. When the Protestant Laity of England move in earnest, then the Church of England will be reformed, and not before.

On this ground alone the reduction of Spiritual Peers in the House of Lords would be highly advantageous, if it should stir up a proper sense of responsibility among the Lay Peers, many of whom are Patrons of Parishes, and all of them more or less influential as local Magnates. The Universities, and other Constituencies here and there, might very possibly send Clergymen as their Representatives to the Lower House. Even if no Clergyman should find his way into Parliament, it would be much better to lean upon the good sense of the Laity, than upon a disproportionate representation of one Order of the Ministry, and that, too, the highest and most dignified, with the least natural liking for reform, and only anxious to sail a smooth course.

If some of the foregoing recommendations should be adopted; if, *e.g.*, the Spiritual Peers should be limited to some *seven* in number (say the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the three principal Bishops of London, Durham, and Winchester, and the Bishops of Oxford and Ely as more especially connected with the Universities); if the Clergy (who are not actually Beneficed or having Cure of Souls) should be rendered eligible to become Candidates for the House of Commons; if Laymen could be induced

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to discuss and entertain Church matters generally throughout the country; then it hardly admits of doubt, that the Protestant public opinion which has been hushed to sleep only too long, would at length make itself known; and then the necessary work would be done, either by the direct action of Parliament, or by means of a properly appointed Royal Commission or some kindred method.

Far from its having "seemed reasonable hitherto to those in place of authority that upon weighty and important considerations changes and alterations should be made" [*Preface to the Book of Common Prayer*], they have rather brought to bear a steady chronic resistance to projects of Reform. It is time that the power of opposition was more duly limited and the *vis inertiæ Episcopalis* counteracted by other methods, and that the mere tradition of representation through Bishops in the House of Lords should give way to something more practical and more generally useful; and if the majority of the Bishops should be released from Parliamentary duties, as has already been proposed, the Spiritual Fathers of the Church would be not less well employed in social intercourse with the Clergy and Laity of their Dioceses; in giving wise counsels to those who stand in need of them; in correcting real abuses; in driving away all erroneous and strange doctrines; in a faithful discharge of the responsibilities of the high and weighty Office to which they have been called, as Bishops of the Church of England.

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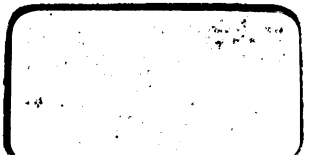

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